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The Thin Red Line arring: Sean Penn and Nick Nolte

Directed by Terrance Malick Playing at Hollywood 16

the Thin Red Line does not end with a climactic battle. It does not have a point-of-view acter or protagonist. It does nave a compelling, linear plot. his is why The Thin Red Line miss most audiences.

fter a 20 - year, Garbo-esque Malick's return to filmmak s among the most well-phophed, yet elusive films of the

ne movie is loosely based on es Jones' novel From Here to nity and is the story of Charlie pany during the battle of dalcanal during World War II. hink of *The Thin Red Line* not movie but as a visual poem. cinematography is breathtakbut the film, like Malick's last e, 1978's Days of Heaven, is ionally distant.

he Thin Red Line is a combinaof several different voice-overs atch, Eddy (Ying the film together. At times



Sean Penn stars as Sgt. Welsh in the war drama The Thin Red Line.

Malick creates a remarkable picture, similar to the power and madness of Apocalypse Now, but Line

often feels disjointed and jumpy. Even though the film is nearly three hours long, it could have benefitted from either a lengthening (some characters are needlessly thrown into the mix, especially George Clooney's ridiculous and gratuitous appearance near the end of the movie) or a drastic shortening. Far too often the film recites philosophical voice-over after voice-over that become stale. Consequently, The Thin Red Line feels

too arty and pretentious.

This film will undoubtedly be compared to Saving Private Ryan, but the two are completely differ-

Spielberg's film, although clichéd, pushes audiences' buttons and gets them involved, whereas Malick's pushes viewers away.

Despite the weakness of Line, it doesn't bow to the almighty emotion and moves in unexpected directions that make it superior to Ryan.(Grade: B+)

Varsity Blues

Starring James Van Der Beek and Jon Voight Directed by Brian Robbins Playing at Hollywood 16

The backup quarterback who comes in to relieve the injured star quarterback has become a cliché in Hollywood. Although Varsity Blues directed with the subtlety and pacing of a TV nmercial (it's an MTV production), the movie is

estling is put nildly entertaining. t is the story of Mox (Van Der Beek), an inteltual who would rather read Vonnegut than his ybook. When the team's Florida State-commit-quarterback (Paul Walker) is hurt during a ne, Mox takes over and becomes the hero of his all West Texas town.

West Canaan is the type of town many Texans will be familiar with: life revolves around football and the head coach, Kilmer (Voight), is a town demagogue. Even the team's hats say Kilmer's Coyotes. Kilmer is obsessed with winning his 23rd district title and when his team blows a game, he

spouts, "You cost me my perfect season!"

Mox is laid back, and this creates conflict between him and his high-strung coach, resulting in a reverse Latrell Sprewell (coach chokes player) and obligatory last-second win.

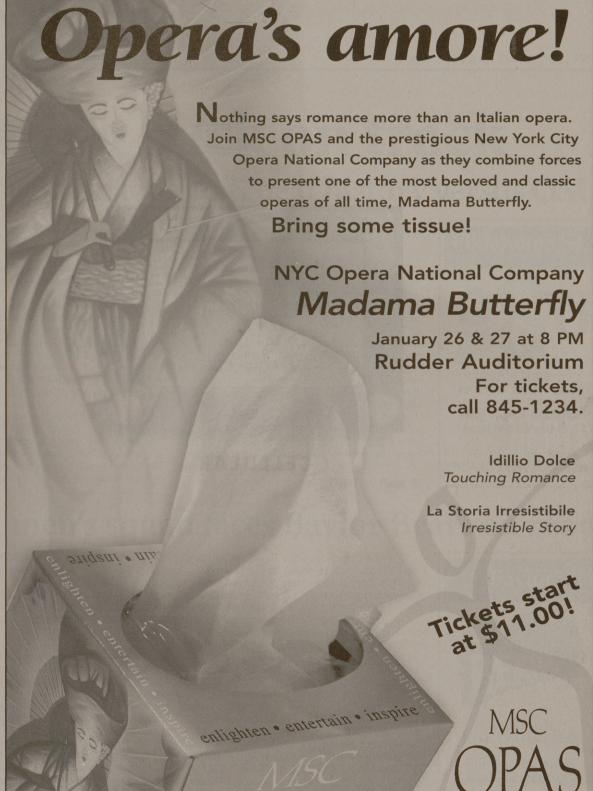
Van Der Beek clearly picked this part to distance himself from the lovesick Dawson on "Dawson's Creek." Mox is not exactly a nice guy; he gets drunk and goes to strip clubs. Van Der Beek is playing with his dark side, perhaps in an attempt to land more roles. Van Der Beek's performance has been compared to that of Tom Cruise in All the Right Moves.

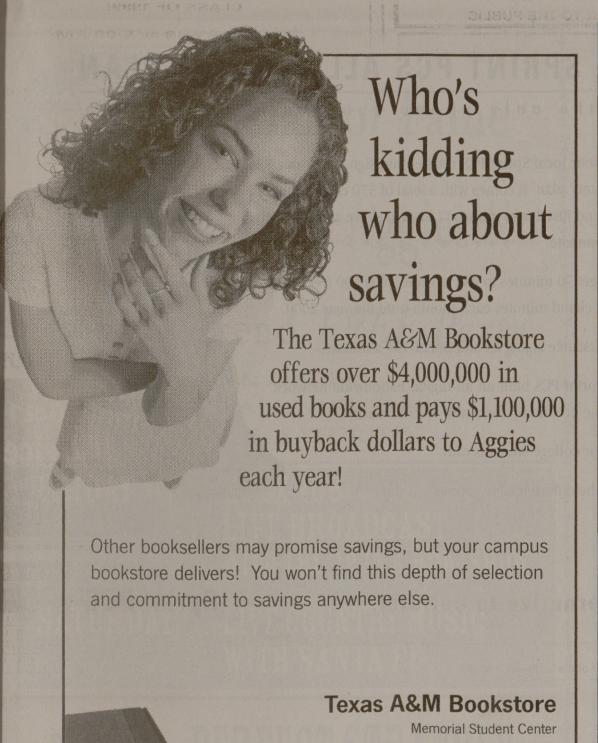
Do not expect Varsity Blues to win any awards. Let it be what it wants to be, entertainment, and it will be worth the ride. (Grade: C+)

— Jeff Schmidt

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